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ABSTRACT

In 1990, a survey was conducted of Texas community colleges to determine what, if any, effects they experienced after the first full semester of the implementation of the Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) implementation. The questionnaire solicited information on the impact of TASP on enrollment and on interactive television and off-campus/satellite programs, current and expected changes in funding levels, the use of local basic skills assessments, computer tracking and monitoring systems, policy and procedural changes, implementation problems, and TASP benefits. Study findings, based on responses from 38 (77%) of the 49 Texas community college districts, included the following: (1) 80% of the respondents reported that more time was needed to gauge the effectiveness of the TASP; (2) 20 colleges reported that TASP had no significant impact on program enrollments, though several schools were anticipating a negative impact on evening programs; (3) 27 colleges reported no significant effect by TASP on overall enrollment, though seven colleges reported that physically handicapped, learning disabled, personal enrichment, and/or prison inmate students appeared to be affected negatively; (4) 37 colleges expected TASP implementation to require an increase in funding and to require significant funding help from the state; (5) 34 colleges administered a local basic skills assessment for placement of incoming students; (6) 23 colleges used the LONESTAR computer program to track and monitor student progress; and (7) all colleges reported making some policy and procedural changes to accommodate the TASP. The survey instrument is attached. (JMC)

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SUMMARY OF RESULTS FROM COMMUNITY COLLEGE TASP EFFECTS QUESTIONNAIRE

FEBRUARY 23, 1990

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Texas Public Community/Junior College Association TASP Committee

Dr. Mike DeVault, Austin Community College Executive Assistant to the President
Dr. Carol Raney, Austin Community College TASP Director

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GENERAL INFORMATION

Community colleges were asked to describe what, if any, effects they are experiencing after the first full semester of Texas Academic Skills Program (TASP) implementation. Responses were received from 38 of the 49 Texas community college districts **(a 77% return rate)**.

Item response tallies vary since respondents did not answer all items. Also, some respondents made multiple comments on narrative items.

Many more students have been grandfathered from TASP this first year than expected. Numbers of students taking the state test are considerably lower than expected by this date. In 1989, 56,781 students completed the TASP Test. The next test date is February 24; more than 13,000 students are registered for that administration.

IMPACT ON PROGRAM ENROLLMENTS

Twenty colleges reported TASP had **no significant effect on PROGRAM enrollments.** The **twelve** colleges reporting a TASP impact, listed effects ranging from negative to positive. Effects attributed to TASP were negative in some vocational-technical programs, and in some courses such as banking or real estate which tie closely to students' current careers. Several schools are anticipating a negative effect on their evening programs. Positive effects are attributed to TASP in developmental course enrollment increases. A few colleges reported shifts in some arts and sciences courses such as the social sciences, and **five** colleges mentioned general enrollment increases but did not tie them directly to TASP.

IMPACT ON STUDENT ENROLLMENTS

Twenty-seven colleges reported **no significant effect by TASP on STUDENT enrollment. Seven** respondents cited one or more of these populations which appear to have experienced a negative effect:

Physically or learning disabled students;
Personal enrichment students, and;
Texas Department of Corrections inmate students.

Ten community colleges offer instruction in TDC units. Several of them have made significant commitments to inmate instruction, and generate significant enrollment dollars from those programs. **Four** colleges reported TDC enrollment decreases ranging from 22% to 52% In the short term, community colleges anticipate having fewer numbers of these inmate students taking classes.

Four colleges report a decline in students enrolling for personal enrichment, and **seven** colleges anticipate a decrease in those enrollments.

Four respondents identified--or anticipate--declines in enrollment by students with disabilities. The disabled student group question appears to be tied to the recent revisions in Sub-chapter P, Testing and Remediation, on exceptional student status.

Before TASP began there was much speculation about what effect it would have on ethnic minority students and international students. So far, **thirty-three** colleges report the **TASP appears to have had no significant impact on enrollments of BLACK, HISPANIC or ASIAN students. Four** colleges listed a 2-3% drop in Hispanic or Black student enrollments, but did not specify TASP as the cause for the decrease. No college reported a TASP-related impact on Asian or INTERNATIONAL student enrollments.

IMPACT ON ITV AND OFF-CAMPUS/SATELLITE PROGRAMS

Thirty-two colleges responded to questions about ITV and off-campus/satellite enrollment shifts. **Twenty-five** schools reported TASP had **no effect on ITV or off-campus enrollment. Four** of the colleges reporting a decline in off-campus enrollments specified TDC programs. No TASP-related increases were reported in off-campus enrollments. **Five** colleges reported a change in ITV enrollments, **four** showing decreases from 7-19%. Respondents noted decreases in numbers of older students enrolling for personal enrichment. **One** college reported ITV enrollments up 25%.

CURRENT AND EXPECTED CHANGES IN FUNDING LEVELS

Thirty-seven of thirty-eight colleges **expect** TASP implementation to **require an increase in funding** and require significant funding help from the State. A low response rate on the current costs items and the diversity of responses to the anticipated funding item prohibit generalization beyond the original statement.

USE OF LOCAL BASIC SKILLS ASSESSMENTS

Thirty-four of thirty-eight institutions reported they **administer a local basic skills asssessment** for placement of incoming students. Colleges have consolidated their choices for local basic skills assessment instruments considerably since TASP went into effect. Use was shown as follows:

19 use locally developed tests;
19 use the Pre-TASP Test;
9 use ASSET, and;
11 use Nelson-Denny (often with another test instrument).

In addition, **six** schools continue to use ACT and SAT scores with pre-set cutoffs, and **five** schools use MAPS. Most significant is that at least **78% of all Texas community colleges** are now administering a local assessment for placement of incoming students. Approximately **98% of the questionnaire respondents are assessing incoming students on a local test, making it possible for students to wait until the 15th college-level credit hour is earned before taking the State test.** Though colleges use a variety of tests to assess locally, they report satisfactory information for use with their students.

COMPUTER TRACKING AND MONITORING SYSTEMS

Twenty-three colleges are using the **LONESTAR** computer program, and **many schools are having to develop additional local computer programs** to accomodate all the monitoring the State requires.

POLICY AND PROCEDURAL CHANGES

All colleges reported making some policy and procedural changes to accomodate the TASP. **Most** changes occur in **assessment, advising and placement policies and procedures, and in documenting students' admission status.** Transfer students' status presents special problems. **Colleges are now requiring more checkpoints and more documentation from students earlier** than before.

COMMON IMPLEMENTATION PROBLEMS

INFORMATION FLOW The difficulty in getting all employees "TASP-trained" and keeping them abreast of the changes colleges experienced in the last 6 months has applied new pressure to find efficient ways to publicize what institutions expect of students and employees.

ADDITIONAL TIME IS REQUIRED TO GET STUDENTS STARTED IN COLLEGES The additional time taken now with every new student, and every continuing student in a mandated remediation program, is straining all resources.

COMPUTER AND STAFF SUPPORT SYSTEMS CAPABILITIES ARE LAGGING BEHIND LEGAL RESPONSIBILITIES Colleges are struggling to keep up with state requirements. It sometimes appears a 16 week semester is too short a time to compile all the State-required data on students' entry status, basic skills proficiency, placement, and remediation.

CREATING--AND LOCATING FUNDS TO PAY FOR--NON COURSE-BASED REMEDIATION Community colleges need help from the State to fund remediation programs that aren't courses. Colleges are now required to offer non course-based remediation programs without State funding support although the colleges' accountability for monitoring student progress and program effectiveness continues.

COST OF PROVIDING ALL ACADEMIC SKILLS PROGRAMS FOR ALL STUDENTS IS INCREASING Students are seeking community college courses almost beyond some schools' ability to provide instruction and the academic skills programs now required by law. The strain on resources will increase dramatically as greater numbers of TASP students enter Texas colleges.

"EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT STATUS" GUIDELINES NEED ADDITIONAL CLARITY As one respondent noted, TASP's expanding bureaucracy and swift changes in the "exceptional student" status guidelines have promoted a feeling of jeopardy among some colleges. Additional respondents commented that the new guidelines may also result in sending an unintended message of discouragement to many students with learning or physical disabilities.

TASP BENEFITS

Most colleges reported some benefit from TASP, or a positive unanticipated outcome from the program's first semester of implementation. These included:

- improved relationships with area high schools and businesses;
- instilling new life in old institutional assessment and placement policies;
- hearing faculty comment favorably about TASP narrowing the band of student skills they face in their classrooms, and;
- increased class attendance.

POTENTIAL LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

Six potential legislative intiatives emerge from these results. Not surprisingly, they all have to do with money in some way.

1. **EMPHASIZE TO LEGISLATORS AND OTHER POLICY MAKERS THE NEED TO FUND THE ACADEMIC SKILLS PORTIONS OF THE PROGRAM**

2. **SECURE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR THE ACADEMIC SKILLS PROGRAMS OF TASP**

3. **SECURE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR NON COURSE-BASED REMEDIATION OR SEEK RELIEF FROM THE STATE REQUIREMENT TO PROVIDE NON COURSE-BASED REMEDIATION**

4. **RESTORE PREVIOUS LEVELS OF PARTICIPATION IN COLLEGE COURSEWORK BY INMATE STUDENTS IN TDC UNITS**

5. **INCREASE FLEXIBILITY TO ACCOMMODATE SPECIAL STUDENT POPULATIONS OR CIRCUMSTANCES**

6. **RESOLVE ISSUES SURROUNDING "EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT STATUS"**

SUMMARY

Community colleges have responded to the Texas Academic Skills Program mandate with speed and commitment. More than three-quarters of all Texas' community and junior colleges now administer a basic skills assessment to place students appropriately in courses. This represents a significant increase in such testing from a year ago. To date, assessment of students on entry to college does not appear to have had any recognizable impact on general student enrollments at a majority of institutions. Ethnic minority students and international students do not appear to have been discouraged from college enrollment. Some decreases have been or noted, or anticipated, in disabled student enrollments, students enrolling for personal enrichment and, most significantly, in TDC unit enrollments. Additional time is required to determine if these real and anticipated decreases are TASP-driven and, if so, to what extent.

Relationships between students' TASP scores and local assessment scores, or between students TASP scores and their grades are not yet discernable, given the brief time the program has been in effect.

Eighty percent of the respondents reported that more time is needed to gauge the effectiveness of the TASP to meet its objectives. Ten percent of the respondents indicated they felt the program was "effective" or "somewhat effective."

Survey results seem to indicate that when students are enrolled in the right courses and get help they need early on, everyone benefits: colleges can anticipate increased state and local dollars in funding; local high school - college relationships are strengthened, and; students go on to become taxpayers instead of tax eaters.

Although it is still too soon to see any effect on retention rates and accomplishment of educational goals, the TASP will likely provide solid information on those questions within the next five to ten years.

TASP Effects Questionnaire

Your Name _____

Name of Your College _____

Has TASP had any significant effect on your ***program*** enrollments? Yes ☐ No ☐

If **Yes**, did it contribute to an ***increase*** ☐ or a ***decrease*** ☐ in your program enrollments? Please show the numbers of students _____ and the _____% of your total enrollments they represent. Give examples of specific enrollment shifts, e.g. declines in some technical-vocational programs, increases in TASP-exempt programs, decreases in various core curriculum courses, increases in pre-collegiate courses, etc.

Has TASP had any significant effect on ***student*** enrollments in specific populations? If Yes, please briefly describe the pattern(s) below.

Anglo Students	Yes ☐	No ☐	International Students	Yes ☐	No ☐
Hispanic Students	Yes ☐	No ☐	Disabled Students	Yes ☐	No ☐
Black Students	Yes ☐	No ☐	Personal Enrichment	Yes ☐	No ☐
Asian/Pacific Islanders	Yes ☐	No ☐	Other Students	Yes ☐	No ☐

Describe pattern(s) here:

Has TASP had a significant effect on your *ITV* enrollments? Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, show the ***increase*** ☐ or ***decrease*** ☐ , and the amount of change from previous ITV enrollments by percent _____%.

• Please turn page •

What aspect of TASP implementation (exclusive of state funding levels) has presented the most difficulty for your college?

What is the greatest benefit of the TASP to your college and students to date?

What is the most significant unanticipated outcome your college has experienced as a result of the TASP?

What is currently your most critical problem or concern relating to TASP?

What TASP-related legislative initiatives do you believe our organization should sponsor?

Please pick one: As of today, I rate TASP's overall effectiveness in meeting its stated objectives as:

Very Effective ☐ Effective ☐ Somewhat Effective ☐ Not Effective ☐ Too Soon To Tell ☐

Thanks for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Please return this to me at the address below by **Wednesday, February 14, 1990.**

Dr. Dan Angel, President
Austin Community College
P.O. Box 140526
Austin, TX 78714

190TASP

Has TASP had a significant effect on your ***satellite/off-campus*** enrollments? Yes ☐ No ☐
If Yes, show the ***increase*** ☐ or ***decrease*** ☐ , and the amount of change from previous satellite/off-campus enrollments by percent _____%.

What percent of this year's operating budget is dedicated to TASP implementation? _____%

What percent of those costs are reimbursed to you through the state? _____%

Do you expect TASP to require an ***increase*** ☐ or ***decrease*** ☐ in funding at your college for the coming year? What percent change in funding do you anticipate? _____% What portion of that increase do you expect to receive from state funds? _____%

Our college administers a basic skills assessment to incoming students: Yes ☐ No ☐
If Yes, check the correct item(s) below:

Pre-TASP Test ☐ ASSET ☐
Local assessment ☐ Other ☐ (Please specify) _____

Did your college administer a local basic skills assessment prior to Fall, 1989? Yes ☐ No ☐
If Yes, what instrument(s) did you use?

What relationship exists (A) between your students' TASP scores and local assessment scores and, (B) between your students' TASP scores and their grades in college-level courses? Please briefly describe these below.

(A)

(B)

What computer program(s) are you using to monitor students' progress, e.g. LONESTAR.

What, if any, policy or procedural changes has your college made because of TASP implementation in the past 12 months?

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